

**MIGUEL SERRANO**

**ANTARCTICA AND OTHER MYTHS**

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*The south is the world of the waters and its beings, like gods or ghosts, emerge from its depths.*

*The decision to publish this lecture has had to be carefully considered. It was written to be heard and not to be read. Thus, it had to be corrected with its publication in mind. But things are born one way and not another. To dwell now on the style would be to ignore the essence of something living and rhythmic. So I have decided to publish it just as it was said, without altering in the least its original form. I have even added those improvised paragraphs at the beginning of the first and second parts, which were interspersed by me when this talk had to be repeated in Daedalus. I have reproduced them as I remember them now.*

*The reader should bear all this in mind. Excesses of adjectivation, repetitions of concepts, or overly redundant periods, are a necessity of spoken discourse. By its essence, the spoken word is magic and the written word is not. Only by making an intense and miraculous effort can it retain much of its influence. And this effort must be made by the reader, taking into account the passionate approach to the author's personality, which also struggles to remain present with him, through the printed word.*

*The following is only the outline of a subject that should be treated in a different and broader way. I wish it to be considered, in spite of everything, as an effort made with my own life, of liquidation of emotions and of their external and internal projection at the end of a culture and of a world in twilight. I do not have much faith in the efficacy of these things, because life must move away towards silence, which is the fruitful medium par excellence. Especially in a fickle and impressionistic time, ruled by propaganda and newspaper news. I could run the risk of being maliciously considered as a political promoter, or surreptitious propagandist, of a certain myth, which is far from my mind, because it would reduce my most ambitious aspirations, and against which I must fight with all my might. My ties with the political past and with the emotion of the war are now only a debt of gratitude in my soul, which I try to pay in the only way possible in my present. But all these things are quite clear in what is written below, and those who can still read and listen in our time will understand this.*

# I

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I repeat this talk so that those who could not hear it earlier because of the storm, lightning and thunder, an Antarctic manifestation, too, may hear talk now.

At the apex of my own years, I have stopped for a moment on the road and turned back, to wait here for the new generations and leave them a sign, which does not matter if it is false or true, for it only intends to be a manifestation and a communication that can shake them. Because the walls of the house of the generations today are cold and dry, with a greater cold than that of the ice of Antarctica, because it is a cold of the mind and a dryness of the spirit.

For this reason, I would like to see in the audience some representatives of the younger generations of Chile.

Antarctica is an exciting and, evidently, multiple subject. However it is treated, it is exciting. I have had to choose the subject of this talk between giving an account of what I have seen and studied objectively in the expedition to Antarctica in which I have just participated, and which lasted three months, or trying to explain to you a more intimate and more difficult matter, which is also related to Antarctica and very especially to Chile, as I see it, or rather, as I sometimes feel it. I could certainly refer here to the technical aspects of the explorations, to the physical geography, to the metals, to the uranium, to the coal and to the seagulls. To tabular icebergs and *pack-ice*. All this is also exciting and I am passionate about it. But others have already done it, or will be able to do it with more authority than me. This is why I have chosen a different topic that I believe has not yet been explored in depth in its relation to Antarctica. If someone thought to hear me talk about the first aspect referred to, this other one may, surely, seem a little strange. And the fact is that this immense white continent, which extends over fourteen million square kilometers, has something for everything and everyone. Thus, I am not going to refer here to penguins, nor to uranium, nor to the rights of the peoples in

dispute. And if at some point I come to deal with whales, I will do so only in the symbolic and mystical way that Job did, or Herman Melville, in his White Whale.

Having said this, I enter the subject with the following reflection, which will serve us to acquire distance and climate: As far as I know, ladies and gentlemen, the Chileans, the beings who live here and were born here, are the ones who live and work here, the beings who live and were born here, have never paid enough attention to what it means to be born or live in Chile; to the fact of being Chileans.

The superficialism that nowadays has cooled this living being that is the earth centuries ago, and that is how nobody thinks that there is a real and deep difference in the fact of living in the north or in the south of the planet. North and south are undeniable and indisputable geographical realities, but they are also psychic and moral realities in the soul of the living being that is the earth. The technical and rationalistic culture of our time ignores or despises these issues, which do not for that reason cease to prevail in the background of the world and cultures. Until today, for ages, it has been happening that all cultures and the races that represent them have derived from the north of the planet, coming down almost from the hyperborean ice in Europe, or migrating from the great Asian steppes. But these old cultures are bankrupt and seem to break the world in its present agony and collapse. It is as if the north of the earth were entering an expected recess, which still has centuries to come, and that it is now the south which is coming into a period of activity and development. All that is in the north must perish and the south begins to acquire preeminence in history. Towards the shadows of the lower end of the world the mysterious current moves and the enigma and the myths begin to fertilize the cold. That is why the duty of the men of the south is to try to understand the signs of their destiny -which is imperious-, because the history of the world and the destiny of the earth, which is ours, through the human conscience happens and only the feeling of the living understanding can preserve the births affirming the infancy of things. Whatever it is, whatever happens, our current mission is to preserve and save the south, integrating it into our consciousness.

It is necessary to try to understand. What is the south, gentlemen?

As the title of this talk says, we will talk about myths and legends, that is, we will deliberately move away from rational, or rationalist, thinking, that other "myth" of a

civilization that dies and leaves nothing, other than corpses of machines and skeletons of skyscrapers, which will not last in time, nor in the soul, what a ring on the finger of a mummy of an Egyptian pharaoh.

Let us turn our eyes, for a moment, to the distant past when the earth was considered a living being. The north was the brain of the planet, the noblest part. This North Pole, where there are only islands and water, is more dematerialized because it is the organ of a supreme function. On the other hand, the South Pole must correspond to the generative part, to the sexual organs of the earth. It is there, at the bottom center of the massive Antarctic continent, below the immense cap of eternal ice, where there is a great dark and solemn cavity, which is the mansion of the Zinoc, or the demon, or the angel of creation; from his fingers and his chest flow the generative currents, the irresistible powers of multiplicity and forms. He is the Zinoc, or the demon, or the angel of creation, something like the shadow of what exists above him, or in his antipode; his existence is composed of the synthesis and the sum of all the shadows of the beings of the world.

At the death of men, he withdraws their shadows and reincorporates them.

And there, in the spiritual and moral counterpart, or rather, in the psychic reality of Antarctica, this black angel lives. In his immense mansion, which is a bottomless space, he moves and usually falls infinitely upside down, legs up, trying to reach, perhaps, through the interior of the earth, the antipodal north of which he dreams and from which he was proscribed in the original drama of creation. Let us imagine ourselves prey to this being, who through us tries to speak his word, before freeing himself, and to spread his great discourse of destruction, hate, love, life and death. Let us imagine ourselves in this company and that we will have to come to feel love and pity for him who has none for us; but who is a unique essential element - ours, our own - in the eternal plan.

Must the culture that will one day be born in the south, if any culture should be born in the south, be inferior because of all this?

To answer this question I go back to the memory of something I read many years ago. I got my hands on a book that said that the future epoch of Aquarius, which is the one that astrologically will come after the present one, would fall on South America, which would be the future continent of the plenary man. I did not understand this language, but

something told me that I should pay attention to this matter, and then, always, mechanically, unconsciously, these words came to my lips and I pronounced or quoted them. What does this mean? Could it be that the man of the south will have to integrate within his realization the totality of the forces and powers that were despised by the disappearing civilization, including in their "plenary", or total form, the dark energies of creation and the real and effective sublimation of the sexual forces, respectfully and mystically considered?

Maybe yes, and this alone would mean a dignification and reintegration of man in the harmonic and throbbing succession of the cosmos.

This is how Chile becomes something extraordinary and how, to a certain extent, we can explain the tremendous atmosphere that envelops our country and of which we ourselves are hardly aware. Because it is very difficult to live and to know. And he who is an actor can rarely be, at the same time, a spectator of his work.

We live in the south, enveloped in thick and malignant telluric influences, which penetrate and corrode us, dissolving and softening us to the bone. Some of this we sense as we sleepwalk, dazed by the slow and dull current of the days. How to escape from the shadow, from the weight of the shadow? How to escape from the nightmare? The people seek in alcohol or in misery; others, in suicide; and the majority, in a tired bitterness, which is accentuated with the years, together with the impression of the failure of a life and the nausea of oneself.

But it is the foreigners who can best inform us about this particularity. They see that the Chilean is sad. And this violent sadness covers the whole of South America. Surely this can refer to the indiscriminate mixture of races, to that bottomless abyss of "racial sin" that has no resolution and that the tormented soul understands; but it usually happens that also foreigners of strong and pure races become infected with time of this sadness and particularity of the South American character, becoming part of this peculiar "climate of the soul".

I had a dear European friend, a Basque artist<sup>1</sup>, who explained to me that he always had the impression in Chile of living in a deep hole, in which he was sinking deeper and

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<sup>1</sup> Gorka Oteiza (editor's note).



deeper and from which he could hardly get out. It's hard to get out," he would tell me, "you have to climb up vertical and slippery walls, where I can't even dig my nails in. And I fall and fall again". Yes, that is, a deep hole, in which it is hard to climb and in which racially, historically, we are sinking. In Chile it is hard to climb, it is hard to live, it hurts and it is heavy to live. The most tremendous work in South America is to live.

I had already written and spoken about this somewhere before, adding that Chile was a "sacred hole"; that is to say, that the same thing that is the reason for our profound evil is also that which makes us unique and lonely and that, someday, must be the cause of our grandiose projection. That which today kills us can also make us stronger. And this is the reason for an irresistible and loving attraction. The Chilean who wishes to flee, to leave, lives and grieves abroad for his homeland. My friend wrote to me that he longed for the nightmare of Chile with all the strength of his heart.

And the fact is that this Chilean disease resembles nothing more than a sacred evil. It is something like epilepsy, which in the vivid intensity of a minute makes us go through the seven heavens, with all its details. It is like syphilis, which at the same time that it eats and corrodes transforms us into genius for two years of our life. Our generation, for example, may not leave anything positive in time and history, looking at what is socially understood as such. It may be that its material and breath work does not exist; but who like it will have rushed to the dregs the intensity of the sacred drama, of a few years already far away, and the unequivocal understanding of the last limits and the truths of fire, drilling the dreadful loneliness? Who like this generation has loved and died in a minute?

It is that, gentlemen, illness and health, or better, illness and improvement alternate with their rhythmic tension to establish the glorification of life.

The Chilean is defeated by the enemy landscape. The malignant emanations of the earth have been disarticulating him; because the truth is that the Chilean and the South American man in general are still completely disconnected from his landscape. There is no correlation between us and the contour, there is no balance.

In the struggle between man and the landscape, the generations are dissolved as in a grandiose process of digestion. Illness and evil exist because man has not yet been able

to develop the identical forces necessary to resist the climate of the south of the world and to be able to fight and defeat it, becoming a triumphant element, because he has been able to understand and give expression to the world around him.

One might think that it has not always been this way, at least as far as the lack of style and social balance is concerned. That is to say, that in the generations of the Chilean past there was more strength, more "style in form" and more enthusiasm and active greatness than in the present ones. And this is effective.

It is that, for sure, the grandiose process of digestion develops in time. Chile entered its historical life with the races and spirits that currently form it only a very short time ago. It was strong and full of vitality races from Europe that came to settle in South America and it was they who "superimposed" here in Chile a *State in form*, with an exclusive and magnificent particular style.

Their strength, their enthusiasm must logically last for the necessary time, until they come to feel the formidable impacts that come from the contour and from the remote depths. Their children will no longer be as strong, with the fortitude of those, nor as enthusiastic, and in this way, descending through the silence of this implicit battle, they will reach us and those who will follow us.

The solution which is obvious and which has been put into practice up to now with excellent results, but which in the long run must also prove ineffective, is that of immigration. New men of refreshment to replace those who fall in the struggle and who, besides having to fight against the landscape, will have to do so against men who have already been negatively assimilated by it, and whom they will instinctively look upon as their enemies. In Argentina, for example, we see today the enthusiasm and the effort of the immigrants, who still have their strength, but who, if they do not spiritually overcome the south, integrating themselves to it by means of understanding, will have to be defeated tomorrow, in the same way as the old Creoles were defeated. In Chile we have the case of the Germans of the south, who today are as abulic and assimilated to the "climate of the soul" as the first Chileans.

It is our generation, undoubtedly, that best serves to illustrate the matter. And it is from it that we draw the strength for the drama that envelops and moves us. Born between two worlds, profoundly invertebrate, with almost no ties to the previous one, as if it had been

born just when its parents were dead, it possesses the characteristics indicated. In her social aspirations, a fatal fate transforms her into a bloody castaway of the most cherished ideals. In her religious intentions, she lacks the firm will and tenacity that would have saved her. And in the field of artistic and literary achievements, very few people today remember the poets of a single book, or a single poem, in which they put their whole life, burning in a passionate moment of maximum intensity. They would then be left as empty and wandering empty lasts on a pilgrimage across bridges and rivers, until their cursed end. I remember here, and more than one of you too, those glorious years when we were all kings around the lighted night, together with the heroes of yesteryear; I hear the voice of the old friends, who are no longer here and who left young, because perhaps they were the beloved of the gods. It is for them, who knew how to be heroes in a minute, that I still stand, or try to stand, with my last strength.... We will go further, perhaps, but surely more annihilated!

The new breath, which will push it northward again, will be given to it by the negotiating spirit.

There is also a magnetic pole in the south; but this pole only exerts its attraction on the spirits.

Gentlemen, the compass of the soul is not marking the north, the compass of the soul is marking the south.

At a certain age of our life we will hear this voice, which faintly, but imperiously, calls us from the south. We will hear it as if from within us pronouncing a name, which is not yet ours, but which must become ours.

Years ago, in Chiloé, in that strange world as if torn from other times, I felt this voice pushing me towards the south. I did not want to resist it, but I could not go on either. I would have liked to dive, to reach the bottom ends of the world, but I could not. However, I had heeded the call and would only wait for a favorable occasion to fulfill it.

It was this year that I was at last able to accomplish part of the journey to the south of our land. But the last southern extremes were not yet reached, because we still lacked the preparation to get there.

So let us try to repeat this journey to Antarctica from here.

Many of you must know our southern lands and have surely sailed through the distant peace of the channels.

From the nearest southern lands, thick with trees, where the araucaria and the copihues preserve the humidity and open, from stretch to stretch, clearings in their forests, where the birds play happily and the heart longs for something distant, to the torrential rivers and the snowy peaks, where a vanished race must once have subsisted, from these exciting lands, let us pass to the world of Chiloé, distant in time. Here nothing reminds us of the present and the great ferns and the lakes and their legends and the men who inhabit it transport us to another age.

I remember waking up early one morning in Chonchi, opening the window and seeing large black birds on the roofs, at the same time that barefoot women were coming up the hills, covered with black shawls, like cloaks, and on their heads, large baskets of cholguas. They were the women of Lemuy, who came to sell their products. A scene ripped from some lost world, in the distance of a history without memories. Then on an immense beach, next to the nalcas and the great waves of the Pacific, the same women in black cloaks, on solitary rocks, with their small half-naked children, eating seaweed, or cholgás, or ghosts of the sea. It seemed like a dream.

Crossing Chiloé, from Chonchi towards the Pacific Ocean, you arrive at Lake Huillinco. And legend has it that it is to this lake where the souls of the dead go; on its shores they wait, until a boat manned by angels approaches, to transport them to the immense sea, from where they must soar into space. The ringing of bells accompanies them on this ascent.

From Chiloé, further south, the real journey begins. It is the Patagonian channels that give us a hint of what this world must have been like. Islets, lands that barely emerge from the waters, with their soft soil, hot with humidity, soaked. Canelos, oaks, tepús, mañíos, small carnivorous flowers, red coicopihues that, nevertheless, do not descend from the copihues family, and the rotten earth, flabby, soft with water and thickness. Day and night, weeks and months, years and ages, water falls from the sky and the atmosphere becomes gray and melancholy. This is a world that barely emerges from the waters, a surviving remnant of other times and of some great distant catastrophe, of

which there are no memories left in the mind of man. A deadly mist invades the climate of these remote and surviving presences, as if the soul of this landscape were that of an old embalmed mummy, or the soul of the pyramids. It is the world of the waters and the beings that inhabit it are the beings of the waters.

When we anchored one morning in Puerto Eden, countless canoes manned by the Alacalufes came alongside our ship. I remember the scene of a half-naked woman, covered in rags, nursing her child in the rain. I had the impression that from that mother's breast did not come out milk, but water; because water is the food and life of those beings, who while they lived naked in the rain were able to subsist; but who, dressed in rags, become ill and die of tuberculosis. There is something frightful in the eyes of these beings. He who has looked into the depths of those almost lifeless pupils shudders. All the anguish, weariness, fright and helplessness of a race are reflected in their expression. It is something like the loss of all hope, like the indescribable weariness of life and eternity. A bottomless abyss and total misery? Let us leave them! They are slowly falling of humidity and soft roots; their heads and eyes, and those stiff hairy crenellations, sisters of the branches of the mañío, are hardly left outside.

It is here, in the Patagonian south, where we can better realize how little we have in common with the landscape. This world corresponds rather to the expression or the work of some other primitive people, which must have disappeared. A people of titans who molded their inner realities in islands and mountains. More clearly: that landscape corresponds to different ideas, different from ours, that world has other gods than ours, or those that we think we have. For the right relationship to be established between that landscape and us, we will have to impose our gods on it, or rediscover the old ones.

The south, up to this point, is the world of the waters; beneath them live their beings, awaiting the moment of resurrection. For, it is written, the Spirit will emerge from the waters.

Beyond, the luminous frame of the great mountains, the Sarmiento and Última Esperanza ranges, with their snows, seem to show us the road to travel. But, as we advance towards the end of our continental world, the water continues to fall and the oppression increases. Only in Punta Arenas the wind comes to free us for a few moments. And it is even further on, in Tierra del Fuego, where we come across a

surprise that we did not expect, after having experienced the profound defeat and abjection of the Alacalufes. The Onas, the surviving race of Tierra del Fuego, are not abject, nor do they have that air of total misery and inner collapse. One can perceive in them the past greatness of their lineage and there is the sign of a pride not yet conquered. What is the reason for all this? We believe we have come to understand it; but we will not dwell on this matter, leaving it for a moment more. For now, we will explain only one thing: if our voyage were to stop at Magellan, as it often happens, it would be incomplete and nothing more important would be obtained from it. We would have cut off the current before its time, for the attraction continues to pull southward. And although beyond Tierra del Fuego only the waters can be seen, the soul understands that a force is pulling it and that a distant voice is calling it, as if beyond life, or beyond the landscape.

Already in Punta Arenas, strange signs are perceived, a clear and pure aura, glimpses of strange images, in open and nocturnal skies, and a wind that comes from another universe, from some unexplored and not so distant point. This impression must have been felt in the same way by the most ancient navigators who arrived here. It is something like the certainty that beyond that sullen and gray sea there must be something that can be reached. This atmosphere of miracle, this little air that we sniff longingly and that bewitches everything, what is it if not the distant voice of the ice that reaches here? The voice of Antarctica that calls us insistently from within, that requires us, that needs us and that will be the only one that will be able to free us. From the center of the ice, the great prisoner has fixed his eyes on us and has already secured us as an easy prey. He calls us by name and leads us to him, to put the seal of his mark, which will give us the pass to subsist and travel in the domains of the old south.

It is the Drake Sea, beyond Cape Horn, gentlemen, something like the purgatory of souls, like Dante's dark jungle; a sea sullen and gray as perhaps was the mood of the privateer who gave it its name. We sailed on it for two full days before reaching our destination. On its waves and enveloped in its mists we advance, even feeling anguish and nausea. It is not even the prologue of the world to come: it is rather its defensive barrier, which must have discouraged with its blackness the daring ones who tried to reach the Antarctic ice region. And it is an unforgettable morning, when we begin to receive the first signs of Antarctica. The board birds, Wilson's petrels, with their wings drawn, as if they had the noble coat of arms of the ice stamped on their chests, approach.

And then come the whitest pigeons, almost transparent, as if they were pieces of ice with wings, detached from the icebergs to come and visit us. The first ice appears on the horizon, and in the white fog the peaks of Smith Island already stand out, like a ghostly apparition, which fully justifies the ancient legends of Tierra del Fuego, which say that sailing far to the south you will find "a white island that is in the sky". Its summits really seem to emerge from the sky. And then, in an instant, the miracle happens: the fog clears and, in the midst of an intense light such as can never be described, Antarctica appears in all its ineffable presence, with its snowy valleys, its immense icebergs, its convulsive and luminous mountain ranges and its bottomless abysses. I will never be able to describe to you what this is. Neither in the previous landscape, nor even less in the gray Drake Sea, is there any transition or hints to prepare us for this new reality and existence.

It is something new for which there are no conceptual equivalences or premises in our minds; it is something like an epiphenomenon, which must be felt, sensed, experienced and which cannot be narrated or explained. For example, all of you, through photographs and stories, believe that in Antarctica the sensation of loneliness and helplessness that one feels must be something enormous. And yet the opposite is true. It is precisely there, in the largest desert in the world, where one can never feel that impression of great solitude that one experiences, on the other hand, in a mountain range of our central valley. Why? It is a mystery. In Antarctica one feels the certainty of being always sailing towards and accompanied by someone, or something, even in the vastest aridity of its ice steppes. Is it the wind that roars in its domains, is it the thunder of the collapses in the ice barriers, which is like the voice of God in the beginning of time, or is it the snow that sometimes falls, or the fog that always comes and sometimes goes away? I rather believe that it is the presence of light, of that unique light in the world -even through the fog and shadow-, of that light that vibrates, that speaks, that speaks. Ah, the light of Antarctica in the clear skies, over the fleets of icebergs, mute companions of those latitudes! The light over those pure mountains, within which the souls of the heroes live! The decomposition of the light in the twilight stained the sky with coagulated red until late at night. And then a moon falling heavy and round announced the moment when the ghostly soul of Antarctica multiplied in absurd forms and extra-human presences.

Rather than describing Antarctica as a painter, which is not possible, I try to do it philosophically, in the form of new concepts. Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego are a very

ancient world, brought to the fright of the remote; but they possess their own and differentiated soul. On the other hand, Antarctica has no soul, it is like a dead man; or rather, it can have all the souls within itself; it is international, undifferentiated, it is beyond the human, beyond our present state. In order to coexist with it, a purely collective aspect of one's own soul must come to the surface in us, a state which was original in the early times and which will be consciously conquered in the future. Ice means pure spirit, and, if we said before that the Spirit emerged from the waters, it is true; but very soon the Spirit was transformed into ice.

However, in that continent of rest and death someone lives. A prisoner stirs, having for his habitable medium the burning and eternal fire. Its inner flames are those that are expressed externally in the cold and ice of Antarctica, its just superficial expression. From there, from its center, that being pulses us in a merciless and ferocious way. It is a fact, gentlemen, that in Antarctica men are seized by obsessive thoughts and terrors (Amundsen spoke of the "embrace of the virgin of the ice"). And there will not be a single expedition that has not suffered from the most absurd difficulties among its members. For my part, in my dreams I had constant revelations of these things, which I will keep silent, as intimate and particular experiences. The dream is the best instrument that we possess to get in touch with the world. The dream and the flesh of Antarctic beings, of seals and penguins, bring us closer to their reality.

It is only by traveling to those latitudes and adapting ourselves to the ice that we will be able to develop in us, and dominate, the dark forces necessary to subsist, survive and win in the harsh landscape of the southern part of the world in which we were born.

The black angel of creation, with whom we will have to fight to the death, pulsates and gives us the pass. Antarctica puts its seal on us and the Lord of the World accepts us into his domain. It serves us very well to illustrate this strange matter, the difference that a moment ago we highlighted, in an admiring way, in the race of the onas. While the Alacalufes give the impression of being a race that was defeated by the surrounding world, the Onas have adapted and continue to adapt. What can this difference be due to? It is the Portuguese anthropologist Mendes Correia who provides us with a luminous thesis, shared in part by a North American anthropologist. Having investigated the origin of these Fuegian races, he comes to the conclusion that they came from Australia, from where they migrated in a very remote time, passing from the island of Tasmania to the edges of the Antarctic polar cap, the lands of Edward VII, the Graham Peninsula, the



South Shetland Islands and arriving at Tierra del Fuego through the Drake Sea, which at that time may have been much narrower.

However this pilgrimage took place, it is evident that it must have lasted for years, the ancestors of the Onas having to acclimatize among the Antarctic ice. A natural selection thus took place that made them fit to withstand the climate of Tierra del Fuego, which came to be dominated by the primitive stock. The Onas lived naked among the ice and it is enough to look at those hairless bodies, depilated by the glaciers, almost identical to those Fuegian rocks, which still preserve the traces of the snowdrifts in their polished and washed profiles. The Onas or the Selknam already possessed the pass, and could resist the evil emanations of this land that they shaped. On the other hand, the Alacalufes must surely correspond to the outposts of those other races which, according to Professor Oliver Schneider, came from the north, where they arrived from the east, or from the Pacific islands, crossing the Bering Strait. They did not have the Antarctic pass, neither the means nor the strength to reach there. They were also constantly fought and rejected by the legitimate sons of the south, according to the legends of those regions. The Alacalufes were defeated by the landscape, and the horror of that tragedy still lingers in their dull eyes. Gentlemen, this is a very interesting subject; but one that we will only have to outline here. We do not dare to walk further inland, because we often have the impression of walking under a natural selection that made them fit to withstand the climate of Tierra del Fuego, which came to be dominated by the primitive stock. The Onas lived naked among the ice and it is enough to look at those hairless bodies, depilated by the glaciers, almost identical to those Fuegian rocks, that still conserve the tracks of the snowdrifts in their polished and washed profiles. The Onas or the Selknam already possessed the pass, and could resist the malignant emanations of this land that they shaped.

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Gentlemen, this is a very interesting subject; but we will only have to outline it here. We do not dare to walk further in, because we often have the impression of walking on the edge of dangerous zones, in which we have no adequate means of expression, no props and no immediate references. However, before finishing the first part of this talk, we want to make it clear that Antarctica is an internal and unpostponable need of the Chilean people, something that should belong to us by right, something that is requested from within.

Our pilgrimage to Antarctica will become more and more necessary, if we want to survive and win. And more and more travelers must go to that world and the number of our expeditions must increase. Antarctica for the Chilean must become like Mecca for the Arabs, and even more, as has already been indicated throughout these words.

## II.

Repeating this talk is like officiating a rite again. Even the new gods seem to float in the air of this little room. May they help me!

Gentlemen, if I were to end this lecture here, the subject would be incompletely treated, as you yourselves will be able to see later. It would also be misunderstood in the sense that I wish to give to this exposition. For I am sure that all these things happen only to a certain extent outside ourselves. And that is what I am going to try to explain in this second part. Therefore, if to any of you what has been said so far may have seemed strange and difficult, it is certain that what follows will be even more so.

As time goes by, I am more and more affirmed in the belief that only on an individual basis can there be a solution to problems. In this age of collectivism, statism and communism, the age of the masses, it is good to affirm already that none of these things has the slightest importance for God. For all this happens mechanically within the historical machinery of the "eternal return". And it is in the midst of this machinery that the myth suddenly bursts forth, which is equivalent to something like a dream in individual life, the language of the most ancient aspirations of the human soul in search of salvation.

We are living today at a critical and definitive moment in history. If we do not want to be thrown into the catastrophe of the worlds and despair, we must try to understand -today or never- and affirm ourselves solidly in our different reality.

As we have been saying, we live in a continent that is wrapped in a very old soul, which shows us a remote past, almost without memories in the human memory.

It is the Selknam, the primitive inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, who in their myths and legends teach us deeply about the most distant past.

Here, before you, I will allow myself to begin to narrate with them the beginning of these things. The Selknam say that the world was created by Temauquel. Temauquel was an infinite being, beyond everything, a presence unreachable and incomprehensible even

to the higher powers of the spirit. Above and below creation, from its very existence, it gave rise to the first world, at the beginning of time. It was a different world, flat, without wrinkles, without rivers, with a low, almost white sky. Over this world floated only the spirit of Temauquel, the unreachable. But behold, it was not Temauquel who formed the first living beings, nor men. Temauquel did not want to meddle in these matters and for that purpose he sent Quenos.

No one knows how or when Quenos came to this central and first earth, nor what was his origin. It is thought that the firmament engendered him, leaning lovingly over the south. And so Quenos was born, as if covered by a guanaco skin. The south of that time was not the present south, but another very old south. And this south was his father and the firmament his mother.

It was the first beings created by Quenos who modified the structure of that central and flat land, transforming themselves into rivers and cooling the earth, which began to wrinkle, giving rise to the mountains. They live there inside those mountains and their magnificent forms can still be seen with the eyes of the spirit.

Quenos personally instructed the first ancestors of the Selknam, teaching them how to dominate the body and the senses in order to become pure spirit, pure "caspi", like Temauquel. And he even revealed to them the secret of immortality, which is achieved by embalming the body inside the ice, in order to resurrect after long ages. The same Quenós directed them in these practices, embalming them and washing away the bad smell when they woke up. Quenós could immortalize his own life when he wanted, until one day he got tired and ascended to the firmament, reintegrating to his mother's bosom.

It was the Jon, Selknam magicians of Tierra del Fuego, who preserved the secrets taught by Quenós and who still immortalize themselves by embalming themselves in the ice of the south, to resurrect renewed in the most distant future. The Selknam also say that it is in the south, there, in that "white island that is in the sky", where the spirits of their ancestors move, living a life free of worries.

It is extraordinarily interesting to pay attention to these legends and myths and then to draw analogies with the researches of the scientists of our time. It is the geographer

Wegener who has most thoroughly investigated all that relates to the mysterious origin of continents and peoples. His theory on the migration of the poles, studied in the Arctic hemisphere, where he died doing his research, serves to establish the hypothesis of the change in the position of the continents which, in turn, move due to the precession of the equinoxes. In this way, Antarctica would have come to be, in a very ancient past, in the position that Brazil has today, for example; which is also proven by the fossil remains of large trees and tropical plants found in the high Antarctic mountains of Victoria Land, in front of the Ross Sea, by Scott and Byrd. When the great layer of its ice, sometimes up to five hundred meters thick, melts, who can say what men will find, and who knows if the remains of distant and primitive civilizations will be discovered?

I have seen the graphic diagrams drawn by Wegener, in which it is supposed that all the continents at first formed a single one (central, without wrinkles) and then began to separate (to wrinkle). Thus were born the various continents, arriving that was moving away first, until it was cut later to be Antarctica, one of them, from South America, as it is still indicated by that umbilical cord of the peninsula of Graham, or O'Higgins Land. It is like a newborn child, to which hangs the umbilical cord, which has not yet been cut. It is curious to draw this analogy of births in the universe. Wegener's primitive scheme (the happy land of the Selknam) resembles nothing more in its form than a shrunken fetus in the womb. And the soul longs for that happy and secure time of the primordial womb.

Everything seems to depart from unity towards multiplicity, towards individuation, to surely return to it at the end of time. And this law from far above is fulfilled in the same way far below. Because the cosmos resembles nothing so much as those old Chinese tea boxes that had another tea box painted on them, and inside this one was painted another little box just like it. And so on, until you lose sight of it.

Wegener's hypothesis also agrees with the legends and traditions of the most primitive peoples of America and Europe, who have whitened from the disappeared continent of Atlantis. It was Plato who referred to the island of Poseidon, the last surviving vestige of this extraordinary continent. That central land of which Wegener speaks and to which the Selknam refer in their legends, could it have been Antarctica? Undoubtedly, when it separated, it must have sunk part of its territory in the waters. But the truth is that both Wegener and the Selknam seem to place this central land in a much more primitive past. Rather, their accounts agree with that of that other legendary continent, also disappeared:

Lemuria. The traditions say that Lemuria, in the south of the world, was inhabited by soft and gigantic beings and that its skies remained covered with thick hot and humid mists; it was a flat land, without wrinkles and that it was destroyed by fire. The existence of Atlantis may rather coincide with the nearest time when Antarctica was a world of temperate climate. What then is Antarctica today? What mysteries does it conceal in its repose, in its embalming, in its death? Was it Lemuria, was it Atlantis? Only on the day of its resurrection will we know.

What does seem certain is that there was an Atlantic continent that has disappeared today. At every moment, signs, racial similarities, languages or traditions among the most distant peoples are indicating it. Legend describes this world as the one where the golden age of the human race flourished. Men attained the highest wisdom and progress, becoming, at the end of their time, masters of supreme energy, having found part of their territory in the waters.

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Throughout space, man is united by his soul and his myths. The Greeks agree with the Selknam in their legend of the Hyperboreans, perfect beings who lived among the northern ice. Apollo traveled every winter to these mansions from where he returned rejuvenated and owner of the secret of eternal youth.

On the other hand, there are such strange stories about Antarctica as the one written by Edgar Allan Poe under the title of *Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym*. Most of you must have read it and will remember the cruel malignity of the beings that in the story appear inhabiting these regions. A strange race, with black teeth and thick lips. Then, the voyage of Gordon Pym in a canoe, accompanied by an Indian, and in which they are swept away by the current that carries them southward. A fine rain of white ash falls from the sky and the Indian, who cannot bear this color, dies pronouncing the mysterious

word "Tekeli-li". It is then, and at the end of the story, when the horizon clears, the fog opens up and the vision of the white giant appears over the sea, surely over the pole.

Did Poe know the legend of the Selknam about the Jon who inhabited the "white island"? Or did he also know about the prisoner of Antarctica, who lives on its black bottom, and who surely for this very reason looks white?

Gentlemen, let us put an end to these stories and return to the world that we improperly call real.

In the moments in which we find ourselves together, me explaining these things and you listening to them, great events are taking place. A culture seems to be dying, if it has not already died, and, at the gates of the disintegrating world, the ever-renewing hordes of the barbarians lie in wait.

The dying Western world leaves nothing behind, and has not yet been able to ascend from its premises to its best achievements. This moment we are living today also seems to repeat itself constantly in the history of mankind: a dying culture and a barbarian world lurking at its gates. There is even the historian who affirms it as a fatal fact of human history and that tries to verify this phenomenon as being realized through the past, in order to project it as an inescapable fatality of the future. The history of culture would thus be like the life of man, which from the cradle comes to the grave, or like that of the tree, or the plant; like everything living, which grows and dies, to give way to the new, which will always repeat the same thing.

I wish now to touch upon a difficult and rugged subject, for which reason it is better that I do so by relying on certain authorities generally recognized by you, or by the circle that was of contemporary thought.

Spengler is the historian who made a whole philosophy of the cyclical repetition of history. And no one can deny that his thought is being fulfilled in our time almost down to the details. It was he who first saw in Bolshevism an Eastern phenomenon ready to corrode like a worm the basic structure of Western civilization. A phenomenon similar to what happened in Rome in the times of Christianity. After the next war," he said, "in which Germany can be annihilated because it is the middle camp in Europe, the center of the whole drama, there will come a long time of internal revolutions, of civil wars, of

cold war, and not to be forgotten, but a long time of internal revolutions, of civil wars, of cold and undeclared war; until the disappearance of our world and its replacement by another. For the world itself can also be renewed, reborn.

But it is evident that Spengler did not consider something very important for the development of his own process. For it is not enough for a decaying world to be replaced by a barbarous world full of biological vitality for the birth of something new to take place. Here, too, it must happen as in the beginning of all things. There must come the breath of the spirit by whose power the brute matter is organized and conforms to a new and miraculous equilibrium. And it is then and there that the myth is born, bursting in the midst of the mechanical gears of the fatal historical process. For the myth of the phoenix to be realized and for a world to be reborn from its ashes, another myth must first be realized among men, springing from the depths of their emotional souls. This is how it has always happened and it will not be the time today for this law to cease to happen. For the word, or the breath, of the Spirit acts from within outward, expressing itself historically in the symbolic language of mythical events, which at a given moment sweep away the conscious will of men.

Clarifying the same idea still further:

For history to renew itself and always begin again, it is not enough with the purely biological fertilization of the barbarians, it is also necessary that the soul of man feels enthusiasm for something again, passion, love and hatred. And this only happens when a dramatic event occurs among them, leaving them intrigued and moved in the depths of their unconscious. It is the historical myth, to which we have made reference, that to act only possesses a language and an argument, which also repeats itself always the same, with the only variant of the towns in which it is verified. Its symbolic language is like that of dreams, in such a way that it is as if human society suddenly entered into a dreamlike life and its unconscious was the perennial source where history is renewed and where it is gathered more deeply.

Against this event, the conceited conscious will must be powerless, as it is powerless at certain moments of individual life when man yields to a violent and overwhelming love, to a great inspiration, or commits a crime of which he never thought himself capable.



It is in the sources of Western rationalist culture itself that we find the germs that cast doubt on its efficacy. Spengler must be complemented by Count Hermann of Keyserling if his philosophy is to be brought even more into line with reality. Just as Spengler narrates the biological and physical mechanics of historical processes, it is Keyserling who has concerned himself with their psychological realization, by describing the spiritual procedure of the birth of myths in history. This philosopher says that at certain moments in the history of peoples, extraordinary beings appear, whom he calls magicians. These beings possess the power of the "Logos Spermatikos", to use his own words, that is to say, a fertilizing force of the social environment in which they live, becoming something like the creative elements used by destiny to renew the life of the soul of the people. The characteristics Keyserling assigns to these beings are: a short life, a fundamental condition for the profound effect of their action, which will be overwhelming as a force of nature. They die soon, for they burn in their own fire.

At his death, or his disappearance, always tragic and mysterious, the collective unconscious of the multitudes, which has remained "in love, fecundated, is not resigned to the disappearance and, as it intuits the great implicit conditions that the magician did not manage to realize in his brief passage through life, it gives birth to legend and myth, then, it gives birth to the legend and the myth, which come to be, transferring the events to the plane of psychic realities, precisely all that the magician could have done and did not do, or all that it is believed that he could have done. In this way the legend corresponds to something real.

Another of the peculiarities of these beings is that almost nothing precise is ever known of their childhood and that their death remains in the necessary doubt and vagueness, conducive to myth and legend. It is not known where they came from or where they went. So it was, for example, with Rama, the legendary Aryan conqueror of India and founder of the Brahmanic caste in Vedic times, who is still believed to live on the summit of the sacred Mount Meru; so it was with Orpheus, in Greece, whose head still sings along the river of time. And Krishna, in India, decides to die at the hands of his enemies in order to convert them to his doctrine, resurrecting later. Jesus himself, according to Keyserling, supremely fulfills the destiny of the magician and disappears without his corpse ever being found.

It is an extraordinary and mysterious event that happens from time to time in history. Let us think for a moment of Muhammad, that anonymous camel driver, who one day, at the age of forty, suffers a syncope and comes back from it transformed, to transform the history of a whole world. It is as if a man were appointed by a mysterious finger and chosen to embody and represent the innermost longings hidden in the soul of a given society at a given time.

Gebauer, a contemporary German thinker, quite unknown to us, as is logical, and who was, moreover, displaced by lesser disseminators, sustained a curious theory of the soul of cultures, races or peoples, assigning to it totally own and defined characteristics and coming to sustain the mystical conclusion that the object of individual life was to surrender to this soul, putting itself at the service of the fulfillment of its destiny, which finds its expression in national history. Thus it might come to pass that at certain moments in the life of a people a mysteriously designated man might come to embody this soul, losing himself to his own personality and becoming a medium, or a possessed person, in whom, however, all see the incarnation of the myth that they themselves carry within.

It is, once the myth has begun, as we have already said, that no one will be able to interrupt its future development, which will follow the same fatal path of the symbols and legends that throughout all this talk we have tried to explain.

Gentlemen, I am sure that you, after hearing these things, as well as I myself, after studying and reading them before, will ask yourselves if perhaps they will also be repeated in our time. For if Spengler's data are true today, it is only fair that Keyserling's data should also be true. And it is extraordinary, gentlemen, to discover that it is so.

This talk is about myths and Antarctica. I have been talking all the time about myths, and now you will see how they always come to be related to Antarctica and all that has been said so far.

Well then, this disappearing of corpses, of lives that pass like cyclones or unleashed forces, and that finally burn in their own fire, seems to remind us of something, something very close and yet difficult to talk about, or even to allude to.

In spite of everything we are going to try, because, as we have said, we must try to understand our time, free of prejudices already, if we want to save ourselves from being dragged into the total catastrophe.

In the year 1947 a strange book was published, which apparently could have passed for just another book and which must be unknown to most of the public. It was an ordinary book in its presentation and published under the sensationalist title *Hitler is alive*. Its author claimed to be one Ladislao Szabó. This book was treated almost in the form of a detective novel, and is surely the most extraordinary detective novel of our time. Written in a passionate tone of hatred against the central character of his work, it is saved from being one more political pamphlet in the already long history of hatred and wars - only by unconsciously falling into the zone of legend and myth.

I will limit myself to summarizing what the book says without further comment.

Back in 1945, two German submarines arrived at the Argentinean coast of Mar del Plata. The war had been over for several months and these submarines had spent all their time at sea. They had a larger crew than necessary and were carrying a large cargo of cigarettes, although none of the crew smoked. According to Mr. Szabó, it later turned out that these submarines, which belonged to the most modern German constructions, capable of remaining submerged for up to six months, were falsely classified, since the designations U-530 and U-977, with which they appeared in the naval archives of the German navy, corresponded to old units under repair in the ports. In this way it was tried to make their disappearance unnoticeable in the final moments of the war. Mr. Szabó claims that these U-boats were part of a "ghost convoy" that accompanied Hitler on his journey to Antarctica. Having strayed away from him in the Atlantic due to storms or other continuances, they lingered for a long time in the same places waiting for news or clues. Needless to say, they did not know the object of the voyage, and the end of their destination.

This is something like the legend of the *Caleuche* or the *Phantom Ship*.

For the author of the book, the haste with which the Americans sent planes to Argentina in search of the U-boat crews is a sign that the Allies were already aware of the whole affair or that they had serious suspicions of Hitler's real fate. The fact that his corpse had

not been found until today and that some prisoners in Nuremberg had declared that Hitler was alive and would return, induced them to maintain effective suspicions of his present whereabouts. Also Admiral Doenitz, in 1943, made a strange statement, which was reproduced by the world press, when he affirmed that the German submarines had discovered in an impregnable point of the planet an earthly paradise for the *Führer*. Thus, according to Szabó, the enormous expedition of Admiral Byrd to Antarctica, at the end of 1946 and the beginning of 1947, with fleets of ships and planes, equipped with radar and the most modern photographic apparatus, together with thermomagnetic detectors, capable of discovering the existence of human life even in subway dwellings, meant an expedition in search of Hitler, rather than in search of uranium or an exercise in the training of material and men in polar struggles. Admiral Byrd's gesture of dropping the United Nations flag from the air as he flew over the South Pole, as a symbolic act of defiance in the loneliest region of the world, can only be explained in this way.

The book ends by calling for a new expedition to Antarctica in search of Hitler, because, for its author, Hitler lives there inside a mountain, which he has excavated. His dwelling has been prepared since the time of Captain Ritscher's German Antarctic expedition to the quadrant opposite Africa, in the Queen Maud Lands, where the mysterious hot water oases were found in 1939. There he lives, accompanied by his staff of fanatics and Germany's best scientists, who had already discovered atomic disintegration and even worse. He only waits now for the right moment to reappear from the ice and unleash the new conflagration that will set the world on fire and in which he will win without the need of an army or any country.

And Mr. Szabó's book ends with the extraordinary and fantastic supposition that Hitler could have been subjected to the procedure of artificial freezing, in which the German scientists had already obtained serious results, as it was demonstrated in the Nuremberg trial, paralyzing the vital functions and returning to life rejuvenated at the previously fixed moment.

Without further comment, we will make a point here.

Gentlemen, a certain dread must invade us. If we have followed attentively through all this talk the story of myths and events that always repeat themselves, the anguish of being only prisoners of an eternal and powerful ring overwhelms us.

At the apex of the times we have lived through, we must stop and reflect: is everything like a nightmare wrapped in beautiful and tragic tinsel, but a nightmare nonetheless? We thought we lived in a time and in a world in which only the light of reason and positive philosophy shone and suddenly we are struck by the suspicion that the very language of empirical science could be only the language of a certain era, ours, which does nothing more than repeat in its scientific idiocy the same argument and the same monotonous history of eternity. Our age, at the end of its time, now in possession of the supreme cosmic power, could well take the same ancient route as the Atlanteans. When at this point science also fulfills the old myths of the Selknam and of Apollo reborn in the northern ice, speaking, in its language, of the immortality of the body and of eternal youth by means of the procedure of artificial freezing.

Once upon a time there was a man who, having reached this point by other ways, suddenly went mad. It was Nietzsche, who upon encountering the discovery of the *Eternal Return* and before falling into his dark night, wrote:

"Time is infinite in the universe and energy limited, therefore, in the eternity of time, everything repeats itself, and not only history, but even your own lives. Therefore, you wretched men, oh, sick men, commit suicide, so that in the eternity of time your torment may be lessened!

Here is the ring of the *Eternal Return*, which is fulfilled at the top as well as at the bottom. What is its purpose? Should we surrender ourselves to Nietzsche's pessimism? No, because if the matter is observed from the angle that we have done it, another conclusion is approaching.

Myth is an inner reality of the soul, rather than an external event in the world. It is as if the soul transposed to external reality laws and events of its own inner reason.

And, gentlemen, is it not then that the whole history of man is nothing more than an external transposition of an exclusive drama of the soul? Is it not then that everything is an illusion and that we are looking outside for something that only within us can have an end? The first ancestors of the Selknam of Tierra del Fuego transformed themselves into mountains and rivers and perhaps this is how it always happens, that is to say, everything

that exists outside -even our physical body- is our fault, for continuing to project outwardly the soul that should be withdrawn. Wilde said that nature imitates art. And so it is, and because it is only an imitation of the soul, its law is monotonous and its repetition eternal.

History thus considered must always repeat itself because it alone will be the eternal expression of the drama of the human soul. And in its ultimate reality the soul moves in search of itself according to a single law that lacks variation. For all this the myth, which is the story in symbols of this unique drama, is also always one and identical. The soul searches for itself in history, and when it has exhausted one path, it catastrophically destroys it in order to be able to initiate another.

We, South America, we, the South, would be a new way.

Considered in this way, history, more than a sociological science, is a psychological science, and in this way Spengler and Keyserling must be complemented by the psychologist Jung who, referring to the *Keyserlingian* magician, describes him as a victim of his own soul, as a being imprisoned by archetypal forces, by his own passionate and tremendous mental creations. The soul must free itself from all this, must free itself from myth and even from history, in order to reach the ultimate reality of *The Self*, that which the Orientals call *nirvana* or *purusha* and the Selknam call Temauquel, as Jung says.

This is what Jung says, but how to achieve it? And this he does not teach, it is indicated by the myths, that is to say, it is indicated to us by our own soul since the beginning of all times. We are a prodigal son who must return, seeking for it the old path of the ice. Apollo's journey to the northern ice in search of eternal youth was symbolic, just as our own journey to Antarctica should be symbolic. He who seeks to immortalize his body externally by scientific procedures will be mistaken.

Because the character of the myth does not exist but within us.

Gentlemen, on our journey to Antarctica, as we approached those distant areas, the ancient admonition of Pindar, the classical poet, began to resound in our ears: "Neither by sea nor by land will you find the road that leads to the region of the eternal ice", and it seemed to us even then that the poet was right. And it seemed to us, even then, that the

poet was right. How to find it, gentlemen, when the region of the ices must only grow in our own hearts? I understood that the real journey to Antarctica had to be made inwardly. It was in my soul that I had to travel the anguished channels of an ancient world emerged from the dread of eternity, where rain always falls and only water reigns. It was there that I should face the inheritance and the psychic memory of the primitive abject races, who were my brothers, who were myself, and continue without fainting, up to where the signs of a distant and different world appear. The passage of the most sullen sea should be done by enduring the nausea of myself, until one day I reach that last corner where the ice of indifference and peace dwells. In order to conquer them for my soul I would have to fight to the death with the black angel of creation, who pulses us and defends his own illusory existence. If I triumph in this struggle, the mystery of the marvelous oasis that exists in the center of Antarctica, where the warmth of eternal life dwells, guarded by the ice of serenity, will open up for me. From there I will return resurrected, reborn, if I wish, or I will raise my dwelling next to my primitive home.

And the symbol of all this is the swastika cross of arms in movement, in eternal return, which dissolves and gives way to the most ancient and primordial cross of immobile arms, which has stopped the external life and which must give us peace.

Gentlemen, it is with emotion that I remember my trip to Antarctica, searching externally for something that can never be found. Because neither the character of the myth exists outside of us, nor the external Antarctica will give us happiness. How many will have traveled before me the path of the old waters! For them, for those lonely ones, for those prisoners of the eternal myth and of the madness of creation, for those mistaken ones who, nevertheless, search with desperation, let us remember the lines of that poem by Nietzsche, that other forsaken one:

*And crows caw, soon it will snow. Sad pilgrim, how pale you are. What thou hast lost, thou shalt never find. Woe to the wretched man, without homeland or home, who at last has reached full solitude!*

Gentlemen, as a Chilean, that is to say, as an inhabitant of the Antarctic zone of the world, which today begins to be born, I have wished to speak these things, perhaps too difficult and obscure. Please forgive me if I have disappointed you in this talk, which perhaps you promised differently. It is difficult, very difficult, to talk about these things;

but I had to do it, because it is what I have felt in Antarctica. It will be one more testimony in honor of that continent which, because of its vastness and fabulousness, admits everything that can be said about it. I have gone there as a writer and as an artist, and in this way it is up to me to talk about it. Others will do it differently and I bow before them, ready to listen to them with all respect. In conclusion, it only remains for me to thank you for the long time that you have been kind enough to listen to me.

## THE RETURN OF THE ICE



*The land of the Spirit is the famous region of ice, mentioned since ancient times and still miraculously surviving.*

*Through the paths of one's own homeland one must seek it (the "bridal homeland"). The landscape of the south of the world is a prologue that invites man to travel it in order to save his life. On my journey to the ice I remembered all the journeys made by my soul in the past, and I almost reached the first of them all. Today, on my return, I am still barely here. At night, sleep carries me away and I return to that white world, far away, beaten by the winds and loneliness. I wander with my nostalgic shadow over the great icebergs and penetrate again through the narrow entrance of Deception Island. That world looks like a lost constellation. What am I still looking for? What have I left there? What have I forgotten? Red skies, skies of another world, water that stills and freezes in my central sea. I go, because I wish to prolong this temporary passage of my humble light, in the red twilights of Antarctica that, beginning early, last until the middle of the night of the ice.*

*The following lines, which accompany the publication of the conference, deal with all this and are something like a small history, a little tremulous, of our celestial family. And something more. They are a sketch, like the conference itself; the resonance of a distant motif, an insinuation, the glimpse of a theme for a more extensive work, hopefully that of my own life.*

I can scarcely remember how the departure was. And he who departed bore other eyes and other dreams. Oh, victim of your own soul, how many roads, how many latitudes! Do you even remember the day, the hour, when the sea raged, when the waves rose and the roaring wind transformed your ship? Farther still, in the origins of time, there was also another departure; someone was dropping tears of worlds and fingers of infinite light parted from yours. Those fingers were soft and eternal; since then they remained outside yourself, around you, invisible. Collapse after collapse, the journey continues. Every effort you make for yourself must take you further and further down. Over there, on a red horizon above the sea, drifting white ice floes. They are cold dead and they come down from that part of the universe where the sea meets the stars. For you must know that there are beings and worlds that still remain in the region of uncreated light, beyond existence, at the limit and on the edge of all departures. They look at you with their iceberg eyes, with their white souls and watch your path. They saw you arrive very

close and then they saw you again incorporate your departure. They thought perhaps that you were heading for the infinite waters, the distant fleets of I in yourself, the frozen ghosts, the silent icebergs.

And you were about to, if it were not for your passionate heart, which errs at every step and stretches out its hands of excited blood, affirming itself in everything that still belongs to it. He also remembers the departure with a celestial voice, he has the certainty of the fingers of light and pushes his old companion the soul towards tenebrous places where everything is transformed. We sail over rails in the sea, over dark precipices, on the edge of abysses. Who will preserve our life? Who will stop our collapse? Let us go on! Anchors, hearts, trembling hands were stretched out. I did not want to die yet, I saved the soul from the cold and extended my tears, my whole personality, all my longing before leaving. It was a message sent to the heart of the world, to the very center of human pain. It was a rope that, unwinding, held us together to all that we were leaving. Life always fulfills our innermost desires. Everything is within us, and from there, as from an inexhaustible womb, the forms of things emerge. The drama of light and shadow, the existence of ice and love are resolved in intimate places. Live and think bleeding in your own drama and you will see that the mystery surrounds you forever and that your thought and your word become a source of living water! You will be the creator of the world and the responsibility for everything that happens will be yours alone.

Why do you wonder then if a crystalline bell begins to beat the sky, and its echoes have broken the glass inside your heart? What fine and sonorous wounds begin to cover you! Are they wounds that come from afar, or are they old wounds that open? The silver metal of your blood drips delicate stalactites. Don't interrupt them, my son, let the wounds grow, because everything must grow. Only one thing you do not know: will you look at the wound from the outside, as one who looks at the dream of a man lying on a road, or will you throw yourself inside, as into the very crater of the night? Then you would fall headlong at breakneck speed. And everything would repeat itself as in the first half of the already old story. I would not be able to follow you and I would see you descend with your legs upwards, looking as if at the bottom of the water of an unfathomable fountain. You can do it, if you want, nothing is forbidden to you and all paths are children of your soul. In the great journey you can climb to the summit of the ice, where there are heroes in white robes, or dive to the bottom of the dark waters,

where the whales await you, who will devote themselves to you. In the depths of their bellies you will inhabit mysterious cities, thick jungles, ignored histories, of a convulsive red color. How few arrive there and can travel the antique currents of the waters, which lead to the oases of a crazy and intense hidden fire! In this drama, in this unalterable adventure, something more than life may be lost, time may be lost, form may be lost. But do not trepitate, for eternity recovers you. While you dream, I wait for you and keep in my mirrors the memory of your image. If ever you return, as if saved from the waters, you will find me at the edge of the fountain, leaning down, to wash your body with my tears and weep together the joy of your return. Ah, I will be at the threshold of a new life, with my arms crossed, to embrace you!

And in this mysterious fundamental story an encounter has taken place. When loneliness encircled the confines and the horizons of the ice were gradually approaching, a boat emerged on the waves. Another being sailed these same waters, once detached from the same center.

What's so strange about our meeting on the sea? I have seen in her hands the line of the stars and in her eyes the memory of the first light. Between the ropes and the masts of the ship her hair was pushed by the cold fury of the winds. My trembling soul, closed in on itself, already accustomed to the vastness of the old ocean, hesitated when it saw the small light appear in the distance. "Close your eyes, soul, and be on your way," I said. But then the dawn of a voice spoke of my own childhood on the sea. And it said all that I had forgotten and stretched out a hand over the angriest waves. How could I not take it? Although I was on an iceberg, I risked my life melting the ice. I risked the prearranged route. And I grabbed the hand and bled for an instant. For this encounter that will last in the eternity of the sea as long as it takes for your ship to pass by my iceberg, I have become a child again and light in the first dawn. And in your hands, the uncreated softness and in your eyes, the long paths of ancient origin! Open your being, look at me in your eyes, don't close your soul yet! Those golden bees, which are yours, and which surround you like a crown of authentic pain, let them come to me and drink the blood of my heart! I want to prolong this encounter in the sullen sea, to enamour my soul and entangle my life in the ropes of your boat. If for this it is necessary to sink into the waters, I will break the miracle of these delicate rails that hold me above the sea and together with you I will descend to the immense bottom, in search of the red feverish cities. If you know the paths, you will guide me, and I will not let go of your hand, nor

will I ever stop looking into your pupils, where there is a cradle of primary pain. Come, I shouted, amidst the fury of the winds, I will give you my life, my paths, I will tell you all my memories! But the waves are already pushing us away, their ship is passing by. Up there, in the stars, his path has also crossed mine and the hour has already sounded.

Because of this encounter, something definitive has happened in the realms of the world. That is why that bell still resounds that bell that even the angels hear and that moves the snow of the heroes. You will pass, we will pass, but the miracle of love fully accomplished in the ritual of sacrifice, unconsciously performed, directed by the summit of the heavens, love of the brotherhood of origin, has saved you! Now I understand, O traveler of green eyes and sweet hands: it is the love that comes from God that performs the miracle and sanctifies all paths. Together we left a long time ago and began to sail on this drop of eternal water, which is perhaps a tear from heaven. Someone was bidding us farewell in our house, someone who stood waiting at the edge of a fountain. After that, I almost don't remember. Do you remember? Your paths diverged from mine and mine from yours. Until this meeting in the middle of the wide sea. Let us try not to forget it. Because of him we have gained security again, because his love has made it possible for me not to go down to the bottom of the waters, not to travel through the tortured cities and that you, who come from there, can begin to walk from where I now have my soul. Traveler, all your life and your pains, your deliveries and your fire you have lived with my soul. And my summits and my ice I have climbed with yours. Through the waves, I give you my hand and my faith. I will carry forever the knowledge of what in you does not change, folded there, around our own life, as around a lake where only eternal images sleep; it will be enough for me to blow on the waters for you to emerge and hear again your Voice and to feel your life, which is my own, in the bottom of the only heart that the world has.

